



*County Gaol,
Castle Hill
1930*

54.24

Cambridge PRISONS Chronicle

c.34.9: Prisons, courts etc

1891 02

Arrest of girl who'd escaped from produced outcry Spinning House & is re-arrested, produces outcry in press & University official convicted of carelessness & ignorance in exercise of his powers; feelings run high & series of meetings called to sort out the matter [2.16]
Spinning House escape, cartoon, how University court works [NI.2.11]

1897 01 16

Judge falls asleep

1897 02 06

Charity Commission scheme; corporation get entire use of Spinning House to expand police station, rebuild one day

1897 09 01

Some remarks were made some time ago with regard to the condition of the Cambridge Workhouse and it was said that the prison would be more comfortable than the Workhouse. Mr Campkin said he knew the condition of the House more than 20 years ago, when the place was in a bad condition and when there was nothing but whitewash on the walls, and that very dirty and grimy. The place then generally bore the aspect of being neglected. Now he thought it really marvellous. The walls were all painted, there was a dado of light and cheerful appearance and everything about the place was scrupulously clean. They found just now that there was a lack of able-bodied inmates. That was not bad, because they did not want able-bodied persons to come into the House and it spoke well for those outside the House that they were able to keep out

1897 11 17

Scarcely a week ago the Vice Chancellor entertained a distinguished company of judges at a banquet in the Hall of Downing College, after which an adjournment was made to the rooms of one of the Fellows. Certain ardent spirits deemed it a favourable opportunity to indulge in a little diversion,

suggested by the obtrusive handle of the door behind which the distinguished guests were killing time. "Why not fix it with stout wire to some neighbouring object?" The wire was forthcoming, the connection was made, and just sufficient length was allowed to admit of the door being opened a few inches - but no more. The judges tugged and tugged and tugged and all the Queens' judges and all the Queen's men would not make the door open sufficiently wide to enable them to get out. One valiantly put his hand through the small opening and tried to sever the wire with a carving knife. When he withdrew his hand it was copiously covered with red paint - and the wire remained intact. It is stated that the distinguished guests took this practical joke in good part - extract from the "Daily Mail"

1897 11 18

Sir - My attention has been called to a curious instance of the gullibility of the correspondent of a London daily paper copied in your columns yesterday. It is true that three undergraduates of this college have been sent down for the remainder of the term, but the offence for which they have been punished was purely of a domestic nature. For the satisfaction of the University, I may add that not one of her Majesty's judges who honoured the college by their presence last Thursday knows anything whatever of the occurrence - J.C. Saunders, Downing College

1898 06 09

Cambridge town council accepted a design for new police and fire brigade buildings, which it is proposed to erect upon the Spinning House site. If the new station is erected the whole of the existing buildings, which are not conspicuous for their beauty, will be removed, with the exception of the chief constable's house, and the fire station and firemen's quarters will be completely isolated from the police building. A new main entrance will be erected and it is suggested that the present stone gateway to the police station should be removed to the back entrance in Downing place. The only elevation of any architectural pretensions will be the main facade towards St Andrews's street. A copula forming a central feature will serve as a "look-out" in connection with the fire station. The plans include provision for a mortuary.

1898 12 21

When Judge Hawkins came to Cambridge on one occasion he essayed to bring his dog with him into Trinity College. But the head porter refused to allow it to be brought within the precincts and persisted even after it had been made known to him that it was the dog of one of her Majesty's judges. The judge was angry at the time, but sent for the head porter and told him that he was right, making him a present in recognition of his trustworthiness

1899 04 19

The days of the Cambridge Spinning House are numbered. It is to be pulled down in order that a house of detention after the best approved modern ideas may arise on its site. There is no more stirring chapter in the history of modern Cambridge than that which this forbidding looking building in St Andrews Street recalls. It speaks of many things which the Cambridge of today is glad to forget. It is an ugly monument of an ugly feud between the authorities of the University and town. The feud is dead: would that the razing to the ground of the Spinning House were sufficient to efface all memory of it

1899 04 19

An inquiry held heard that half of the Spinning House was occupied as a police station. It had been built about 1840 and was far from up to date. There was no difference between the accommodation for male and female prisoners, and any women that might be kept in the police station all night had to be attended to by police constables on duty, there being no female warders or matrons. The cells were clean and in good order but were quite inadequate for the requirements of the town

1900

1901 10 07

The police station is part of the machinery which Society has devised for its own protection and for inflicting punishment upon wrong doers. In the golden age there will be no use for Police Stations, and the fine building of which Cambridge has just witnessed the opening may justifiably be converted into a Free Library. There is no virtue in locking up a wrong doer in an ugly prison and the architect of the new station, Mr John Morley, has designed a building which is an ornament to the town. The cells are not luxurious but they are not stifling. It is true the building has cost a good deal but is excellent value for money.

1901 12 05

The Church Street Mission is quite distinct from the Cambridge Female Refuge but is auxiliary to it. Miss Elsdon walks about the street at night and is able to persuade women who have gone astray to go with her to the Mission House and stay in safety for a few days until they can be received into the Refuge. Sometimes women come voluntarily and sometimes they are brought by the police. She also provides an escort for female prisoners on their discharge, meeting them at the prison and escorting them to the railway station, thus protecting them from evil influences in the town at the first moment of their freedom.

1902 01 30 c

Cambridge Discharged Prisoners Aid Society heard that Cambridge prison has not been fully occupied by local prisoners during the past year but the Commissioner had sent down a number of military prisoners as well as others from London and other prisons. These transfer cases had added considerably to their work. They had investigated 186 cases, including 53 female. The Church Army Home in Fair Street & the Cambridge Female Mission had been most helpful. An Association of Lady Visitors had been established to adopt measures for setting up in honest life of those unfortunate women who come under the grip of criminal law, in whose case the attendant shame is always attended with peculiar difficulty CDN 1902 01 30

1902 02 22

Smallpox at gaol, p3

1902 03 03

Sir - Cambridge Corporation has its roads cleaned between the hours of eight in the morning and five in the evening. As soon as the roads become busy a one-horse sweeping machine makes its appearance and begins to sweep the mud from the centre of the road to within three inches of the kerb, and there leaves it for 36 hours. By that time the public have removed it on their clothes, or it has been splashed on the front of adjoining houses, or else the Corporation employ a few boys to sweep it into nice heaps which they leave at some place that it is convenient for the public to step into. But should there by any chance be any left the Corporation kindly send two men and a cart to remove it – Grateful Ratepayer

1902 03 10

Another case of smallpox has occurred at Cambridge Prison, Castle Hill. The spread of the disease is a mystery. The first case was in a prisoner from Maidstone. Prompt isolation followed. Another was found suffering from an infectious disease diagnosed as scarlet fever and he was moved to the Sanatorium. Other symptoms developed and he died. A few hours after a warder was smitten with smallpox and now there is a fourth case, a prisoner confined in the gaol for several months. Elsewhere infection has been traced to letters that have come from London where the epidemic is now raging. At Cambridge gaol mailbags are repaired in large numbers. They come from all parts of the country and may have carried the microbes that cause the disease.

1902 03 14

Sir – A man from the Cambridge prison, which they knew to be infected with smallpox, was admitted to the Sanatorium and yet no precautions were taken in the way of vaccination. His nurses passed into the room day and night. I object strongly to the want of promptitude in telephoning me as soon as smallpox was suspected so that I might be aware of the possible danger and be able to take

precautions. I would not allow my patients to go to the Sanatorium if they are to be exposed to such risks – E. Lloyd Jones

1902 04 03

Chesterton U.D.C. had asked the Prison Commissioners to provide accommodation for small-pox patients at Cambridge Gaol but they did not see their way to do that and urged the local authorities to provide room for the patients in their own accommodation. Chesterton would be prepared to place the small-pox hospital at the disposal of the gaol authorities but felt the prison should guarantee expenses and pointed out the difficulty of the safe custody of the prisoners.

1902 05 07

It will probably surprise many that there is no telephonic communication between Cambridge Police Court and the County Gaol. This morning when a trial was to have proceeded it was reported that the defendant was too unwell to leave prison. The question was asked as to how long he was likely to be absent and a special messenger was sent to Dr Buckingham, the Prison Surgeon. The Chairman said they were surprised to find there were some antiquated notions which had prevented the telephone from being laid on between the two places and thought councillors should see it was remedied

1902 05 13

A young Cambridge man who was imprisoned through being in arrears on a wife's maintenance payment contracted small-pox whilst lying at the county gaol, Castle Street. He was removed to the hut but succumbed to the disease on Sunday last. Deceased, we believe, had only been in gaol 18 days. He was buried last night.

1902 12 04

Small pox at prison, p3

1904 01 30

A savage attack has been perpetrated by a prisoner at the Cambridge gaol upon a warder named Andrews, which resulted in severe injuries. Amongst a gang of prisoners chipping wood was one of morose disposition who suddenly rushed upon the unsuspecting warder and dealt him a terrible blow with a hatchet. Assistance was at hand and the prisoner was secured. He has been reported to magistrates and subjected to a severe flogging for his cowardly assault. Flogging is the most severe punishment than can be inflicted on a prisoner and is only carried out in serious cases such as this, or for mutiny. 04 01 30

1904 05 18

The unexpected death of a prisoner at the Cambridge Prison occasioned the holding of an inquest. The man's name appeared to be Patrick O'Shea, though as a matter of fact he had a variety of names – Nil, Laughton, Carrington, MacDonald, MacArthur, Montmorency and Hassan Effendi. He gave his age as 45 and his occupation that of a labourer and was committed for trial for stealing money in Wisbech. Warder Andrews said he heard a noise from the cell and found the man apparently in a fit. Death was due to apoplexy. 04 05 18

1904 11 22

Frederick Silk told the court that he was driving the prison van along St Andrew's Street in Cambridge when he ran into a handcart & knocked its 63-year old driver down, cutting his hands and face. The man had been drunk and pushed the cart into his wheel; there was no other traffic on the road at the time. Silk could not stop because he was going to the station with the 'Black Maria' to fetch some prisoners from the 4.30 train. He was fined £1

1905 01 21

A serious charge has been brought against the trumpeters who, on the occasion of the Assize at Cambridge, blow a fanfare as the judge steps from his carriage at the Shire hall. They are accused of being unable to keep in tune and wailing as diversely as any pair of cats. I would not undertake to

estimate their ability as musicians, but as a sort of variety turn they certainly take a high place. But the learned judge expressed himself highly pleased with the way they performed their duties. 05 01 21

1905 04 14

Mr Palmer, the Melbourn Passive Resister who determined to suffer imprisonment rather than pay the education portion of the poor rate has emerged from Cambridge gaol after seven days. As a teetotaler and non-smoker prison discipline brought few privations but the food was painfully plain, all the bread was brown and there was a bran suet pudding. He was set to work mending mailbags. He had no complaint about his treatment by the warders but says the governor went out of his way to be offensive 05 04 14a-c

1905 04 18

Bertram Palmer, the Melbourn Passive Resister said the County Gaol seemed to be the busiest place in Cambridge. It was like a beehive. There were a number of cells and a busy bee in each one. The warder gave him a number of mail bags to patch and said he expected to see them done by the next day. He had to keep things clean in his cell. He was given a bucket, a scrubbing brush, a piece of stone and a piece of cloth. It was not at all amusing being in gaol but he had been the 150th Passive Resister to go there and he would go again if he thought it would aid the cause. 05 04 18-

1906 04 06

Rev S. Newling, a nonconformist minister of Isleham is spending a week in the Cambridge county gaol for non-payment of the educational portion of the poor rate. Magistrates issued a distress warrant but he had made over all his worldly goods to his wife, so he was committed to prison. It is expected that when he is released he will be met at the prison gates by several prominent members of the Free Church Council. 06 04 06

1906 04 07

The Isleham Baptist pastor was sentenced to seven days in Cambridge county gaol but only served four. Having entered on Monday evening he was released on Saturday, as they do not keep a prisoner over the Sunday. He brought out with him a huge lump of the brown bread that formed the chief article of his diet: it was served with tea for breakfast, with soup for dinner and cocoa for supper. 06 04 07c-d

1906 05 09

Death in gaol, p3

1906 11 12

With the death of John William Cooper Cambridge loses one of its most pronounced personalities. As a barrister in the Daisy Hopkins case he ruthlessly exposed the evils of the Spinning House and few can understand the amount of good work he did behind the scenes. Latterly folk have agreed that he was breaking up, but though he may have suffered physically he never showed signs that his mental vigour had diminished. 06 11 12a & b & c

1908

Borough justices considers probation service & appoints two men & one woman on voluntary basis [6.5]

1908 03 09

Mr A.H. Hawke has been appointed Governor of the Cambridge Prison. He has served at Wandsworth, Wakefield and Hull and takes a great interest in social reform, life saving and ambulance work. His recreations are cycling, lawn tennis and chess. 08 03 09b

1908 04 17

When the jury retired to consider their verdict at the Assize Court, Castle Hill, they were taken down a flight of cold stone steps into a narrow chamber of sordid aspect, dimly lit by three barred windows

and furnished with two bare wooden forms. The Court does not want the retiring room made too comfortable, but there must have been times when they have made up their minds hastily to escape from that dungeon. Now a new room has been built, with a lavatory. But the court is still illuminated by gas and flooded with fumes. Silver-tongued barristers halt while the custodian, armed with his long pole, leans from the dock to light it. 08 04 17c

1908 05 16

A wardress at the County Gaol, Castle Hill, told the inquest that a single mother and her baby had been put in the reception cell and slept on a plank bed with a mattress. In the morning the baby was dead and she concluded the prisoner had overlaid it. There was no room for cradles in reception cells, which were very small, and when they were provided in the main cells the mothers never thought of laying babies there at night. The Coroner did not attach any blame to anyone. The narrow bed was altogether insufficient for the child and mother and now they knew that would not happen again. The jury said a cot should be provided. 08 05 16b

1908 10 09

Cambridge Prison is satisfactory and discipline well-maintained. The number of male prisoners last year was 818 and their conduct generally good. They are employed at oakum picking, sawing, chopping and bundling wood, gardening and building work while the female prisoners do needlework, knitting, laundry work and cleaning. One female prisoner, aged 66, was baptised at her own request. The schoolmaster has carried out his duties with zeal in his new schoolroom where 45 prisoners have been under instruction. There has been no escape, no attempt at escape and no case for corporal punishment CWN 08 10 09 p3

1909

Separate court for juveniles & police sergeant paid 10/- for each of three cases in which he acted as probation officer; within year County probation service began [6.5]

1909 01 01

F.W. Fawcett was the architect of many Cambridge buildings including the Cavendish Laboratory & various departments in the New Museums site. He undertook the restoration of a large part of Queens' College, designed additions to Addenbrooke's Hospital, remodelled the County Gaol & built the Training College for Women, the County Police Station, several college boathouses and cricket pavilions as well as several large mansions including Longstowe and Six Mile Bottom. CWN 09 01 01

1910 01 07

The old-fashioned and, on hygienic grounds, objectionable practice of 'kissing the Book' in taking the oath in courts of law, was relegated to the limbo of obsolete custom on New Years' Day by the coming into force of the new Oaths Acts. Now a person being sworn has to take the Testament in his right hand and swear to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. The new oath was used in Cambridge courts on Saturday, the first witness to be sworn being Miss Florence Butler of Sturton Street. CWN 10 01 07g

1910 06 17

At the last stroke of eight o'clock in the morning James Henry Hancock paid the extreme penalty of the law for the murder of Alfred Doggett at Chesterton. The execution took place at the County Gaol, Castle Hill. Pierpoint was the executioner, assisted by his brother, and they accomplished their deadly work with marvellous celerity, death having been absolutely instantaneous. Only the Deputy Sheriff, the Governor of the Prison, the Prison Chaplain and Doctor were present but a crowd of several hundred assembled on the pavement opposite the Shire Hall. They kept their gaze fixed on the flag-staff, unaware that the practice of hoisting the black flag has been discontinued. Nor was the bell tolled. It is 12 years since the extreme penalty of the law was last paid within the walls of the County Gaol. The last culprit was Walter Horsford, the notorious St Neots poisoner, who was hanged on 28th June 1898 for the murder of his cousin. Prior to that there was a long period during which the

hangman was not called upon for it was as far back as December 1876 that Robert Browning was executed for the murder of a woman on Midsummer Common. The last public execution in the county was in March 1864 when a man was hanged for the murder of a girl at Whittlesey. Shortly after this the law was passed putting a stop to executions in public and the tendency now is for complete privacy 10 06 17b 10 06 17c

1912 09 06

Cambridge Prison warden, C. Corby – interesting reminiscences of 30 years – 12 09 06l & m

1912 10 04

Cambridge Prison Governor's annual report – 12 10 04i

1912 12 13

William Dobson, successor to the late Mr A.H. Hawke as Governor of the Cambridge Prison, was born in a police station in 1859 and has been connected with crime and criminals all his life. He was previously Chief Warder in the Borstal Institution at Feltham and believes that even judges do not realise what the system is doing to reduce crime. Mr Dobson married 25 years ago and has six children. His two eldest sons are soldiers and one of his brothers is Chief Inspector of the Newcastle City Police. 12 12 13f

1912 12 20

An inquest into a man who died at Cambridge gaol while awaiting trial was told he was a wheelwright who'd complained of pains in his insides for a long time. He'd suffered a haemorrhage. His wife said she'd had every opportunity to see him and that he'd been as kindly treated 'as though he had been a gentleman'. The officers, governor and doctor had spared nothing to save his life 12 12 20j

1913 02 07

Discharged prisoners' aid society heard that sixteen-year-old girls presented the greatest difficulty. In the past Proctors had the Spinning House where the reform and improvement had been carried out effectively. But it had been abolished for fear of wrongful arrest of women. Another problem was people suffering from 'ergophobia'. They were the type who slept well and ate well, but 'came over all of a tremble' if they were shown a piece of work 13 02 07 p9 CIP

1913 07 04

Prisoner dies in County Gaol - 13 07 04 p9 CIP

1913 08 01

Death prison wardress, female side 13 08 01 p12 CIP

1913 11 07

Frederick Seekings, a Brampton man was hanged in Cambridge Gaol for the murder of his wife. Mr T.W. Pierpoint was the executioner and the hanging was expeditiously carried out, death being instantaneous. Very little interest in the execution was shown by the public. There was but a mere handful of people outside the Shire Hall, chiefly composed of errand boys and youths. The black flag was not hoisted nor was the prison bell tolled, and there was nothing whatever to indicate that anything unusual was taking place. 13 11 07 p08 CIP

1913 11 07

Hangings at Cambridge County Gaol & elsewhere

1801 03 William Grimshaw, house breaking

1802 04 William Wright & John Bullock, arson

1812 03 28 William Nightingale, alias Bird, forgery

1812 08 08 Daniel Dawson, poisoning horse at Newmarket

1816 06 28 John Dennis, Isaac Harley, Thomas Smith, William Beamiss & George Crow, Littleport riots, at Ely

1817 John Scare, burglary Whittlesford
1819 08 06 Thomas Weems, murdered wife Arrington
1824 04 03 John Lane, rape
1827 09 31 Joshua Slade, murder rector Stukely, at Huntingdon
1829 James Bishop, sheep stealing, at Huntingdon
1829 04 William Osborn, of Boxworth for highway robbery
1830 04 03 William Reader, William Turner & David Howard, arson Linton
1833 03 29 William Westnot & Charles Carter, attempted murder of gamekeeper
1833 12 John Stallan, arson, Sawston
1850 04 30 Elias Lucas & Mary Reeder, poisoning wife at Castle Camps
1861 08 10 Augustus Hilton, murder wife at Parson Drove
1864 03 11 John Green, murder of girl at Whittlesey, last public execution
1876 12 14 Robert Browning, private execution
1878 11 25 Henry Gilbert, murder of child at Hail Weston, at Huntingdon
1898 06 Walter Horsford, St Neots prisoner
1910 06 14 James Henry Hancock, murdered Alfred Doggett at Chesterton
1913 11 02 Frederick Seekings, murdered wife at Brampton 13 11 07 p8 CIP

1914 07 10

Gaol closure female side: The Chief Constable reported that as there were so few prisoners, the female side of Cambridge Prison had been closed, and in future all commitments of women will have to be made to the prisons at Ipswich and Northampton 14 07 10 p4

1915 10 20

Assizes – trumpeters in khaki – photo – 15 10 20e

1916 02 09

One of the most astonishing results of the war is the effect it has, had on crime. This matter has been commented upon at every Assize and Quarter Sessions for the last twelve months or so. The calendars have been so light as to cause astonishment. Serious crime seems almost to have come to an end, and the presentation to the Chairmen of Quarter Sessions of white gloves as evidence of there being no prisoners for trial has become quite a common occurrence. As a consequence of this change in our normal conditions, some of His Majesty's prisons have hardly any prisoners, in them, and as a war-time economy, it is proposed to close some of them for the time being. Cambridge is to be added to the number closed during the period of the war. It is a remarkable proposition, although we should like to that that we could get along without a prison in our midst 16 02 09 CIPof, 16 02 09b

1918 11 13

End of the war rejoicings: huge crowds celebrate ... news arrived about eleven and spread like wildfire ... Union Jack hoisted at Town Hall and soon youngsters cheering in the streets ... bunting ... rush to post office to despatch telegrams ... unhappily undergraduates degenerated into a vulgar rag ... broke windows, wrecked old police courts and put bells of GSM out of action – 18 11 13a, b

1919 02 05

Magistrate Summoned. At the Cambridge Borough Court, a County magistrate living in Hills Road, Cambridge, was summoned that, as occupier of premises, he did not as soon as conveniently may be after the cessation of a fall of snow, remove or cause to be removed from the footway and pavement all snow on such footway and pavement. He did not appear, but sent a letter to the Bench explaining that he only had one domestic, and could not call on her to clear the snow away. An odd man, who was called, wanted art extravagant sum for removing it. The Mayor said the case was a proper one for the police to bring before the court. It was a considerable comfort to the public if every householder cleared away the snow from his own frontage. He warned the public that cases of this kind would be dealt with more severely in the future, but as this was the first of the kind to come before the Bench this year, they had decided to dismiss it on payment of costs.

1919 03 26

His Honour Judge Wheeler. We learn with regret that His Honour Judge Wheeler, K.C., of many years, until, recently, Judge of the Cambridge County Court, is lying seriously ill at his residence, in Warwick Gardens (London). A memorial from the Registrars of Courts in the circuit has been privately presented to him, consisting of a solid silver salver bearing the Judge's crest, together with an illuminated address containing the signatures of the Registrars in the district. The presentation gave great pleasure to His Honour 19 03 26

1920

1920 09 01

First five lady JPs appointed [2.9]

1920 10 04

Women jurors try their first case – CDN 20 10 04

1921 03 23

Assize court figures of Law, Justice, Mercy & Power to be removed – 21 03 23f, 21 03 30e

1922 01 04

Assize Court figures of Law, Justice, Mercy & Power to remain, had been removed 22 01 04c

1923 03 15

At the Ely Diocesan conference the question of full reports of divorce court proceedings in newspapers was discussed and a resolution passed “That this conference protests against the publicity in the newspapers of full reports of trials in the divorce courts as being offensive and detrimental”. Mr Sells said they had the advantage over their forefathers by having their sewage taken away silently and quietly, and it seemed wrong that their moral sewage was not treated in the same way. It was now allowed to linger about and pollute the air. A friend had told him of two urchins in a car glancing over the unsavoury details put before them. It would be impossible to overestimate the harm done to the rising generation by such things

1923 12 22

During the past 28 years a police-court missionary has been engaged in the Cambridge courts. It has for its main object the reformation of all, irrespective of creed, who pass through the police courts. No matter what the offence or how often repeated, none are too young to be helped, no criminal too hardened. Almost every case undertaken means some expenditure. It costs money to provide boots, clothing, travel expenses and entrance fees to homes and institutions. This is a period of numerous charitable appeals but we doubt if any object is more worthy of support and more productive of lasting good.

1925 01 19

A fire broke out in the Grand Jury Room at the Shire Hall which destroyed all the woodwork and furniture. It is a large room situated at the front of the building on the Police Station side and contained a table and some chairs. A stairway leads from it to the grand jury gallery in the Crown Court and it was through the fire roaring up these stairs that damage was done to the court by smoke and steam.

1927 12 31

County to buy gaol, p6

1928 01 02

The Home Secretary has decided to discontinue the Cambridge prison on Castle Hill and has offered it to the County Council for £4,812. The buildings consist of a central block comprising laundry, workshop, kitchen, labour cells, ladder store, hospital, photographers' hut, execution shed,

schoolroom and governor's house. The Office of Works wishes to lease the main buildings to store their records in. This would not prevent the council in the future from building a new county hall on the prison site. 28 01 02

1928 01 02

An interesting discussion in regard to the future of Cambridge Prison and the Castle Mound took place at a meeting of the County Council. The Home Secretary would convey it to them for £4,812. The County did not want the mound, which was more closely connected with Cambridge than the rest of the county. All persons interested, including the Borough Council and the Cambridge Antiquarian Society would be consulted when its future was settled. Something was also said about the possibility of removing the County Hall in Hobson Street to the Shire Hall site 28 01 02

1928 05

Order plans for a new Shire Hall, Castle Hill, on site of County Gaol, this had stood idle since prisoners transferred to Huntingdon gaol; in 1919 the building had been fitted up as a branch repository of the Public Record Office. Site acquired for County Council, records sent away, & new Shire Hall started using bricks from the old gaol [2.2]

1929 01 28

Certain documents of an historical nature are stored in Cambridge prison on Castle Hill and access is permitted to University students for the purpose of study. But if a County Hall is built on the site the Prison will be pulled down and the documents removed. The University fears that they would lose a very big educational factor and urge the County Council to provide accommodation for them in their new building. Having regard to the tendency of modern legislation to give Councils more work they would probably require considerably more accommodation at the end of 20 years and such storage would then be valuable for administrative purposes. 29 01 28

1929 04 13

Shire Hall courts debate, p8

1929 11 04

The Government Office of Works have made arrangements for the records at present stored in the old Prison on Castle Hill, to be removed from Cambridge to another disused gaol. It is their policy to concentrate such records at Canterbury. The Governor's House at the old Prison will be adapted to provide temporary accommodation for county council staff and rooms in the prison gatehouse used for storage purposes. This has released accommodation at the County Hall for other departments
CDN 4.11.1929

1930

1930 06 19

County gaol photo, p5

1930 06 20

The old county gaol at Castle Hill was opened to the public. Since 1916 when it was closed because of a scarcity of prisoners – it has been said there were not enough to keep the place clean – the prison has only been used for Government record purposes. Then it changed hands and became the property of the County Council; a writer to the CDN threw out the suggestion that it should be opened for public visitation, and the scheme became an actuality. Maids in their scanty summer frocks, flannelled youths, mothers and fathers and grandfathers queued for admission to the County Gaol on Cambridge Castle Hill. The execution shed was a popular rendezvous along with the condemned cell, the burial ground and padded cell. People searched for links with the past. They found few. The gaol is not what it was. Dirt and rust have replaced whitewashed walls and polished steelwork and certain parts have become dilapidated. 30 06 20a [2.5,1.10,2.6]

1930 06 21

Well over 700 people visited the Cambridge County Gaol; it is a dingy old place and looks a good deal the worse for wear. Most were surprised at the size of the prison and had no idea that such extensive accommodation was provided. Having explored the interior the majority couldn't resist the fascination of a visit to the execution shed just outside. 30 06 21b

1930 06 23

Gaol photo, p7

1933 10 10

Assize trumpeters pic, p1

1939 11 13

The Conscientious Objectors Tribunal under Judge W. Lawson Campbell heard its first cases. A teacher from St Faith's School thought war was incompatible with the teaching of Jesus Christ, a clerk at the Cambridge Electrical Supply Company was a member of the Peace Pledge Union & believed military training led to the decadence of the human race while an undergraduate felt war degraded humanity but would do medical work. 39 11 13 & a; also 39 11 14, 39 11 15, 39 11 16a & b

1940

1941 04 25

Judge Farrant Leaves the Bench. Few people (writes Watchman) who know the upright figure of His Honour H. G. Farrant would realise he is 77 years of age and I hear that his advancing years have led to his retirement from Bench activities in the County. Judge Farrant, as he is usually called - although he retired from the position of County Court Judge in 1937 - has been Chairman of the Cambridgeshire County Quarter Sessions since 1927, and of the Isle of Ely Quarter Sessions since 1921. It was in 1927, too, that he was elected Chairman of the Cambridgeshire Divisional Bench. Previously he had had experience in Worcestershire, having been appointed a Justice of the Peace there in 1909 about the same time as he became a revisionary barrister on the Oxford Circuit. Among the important positions which he has held was that of President of the Society of Chairmen of Quarter Sessions, to which he was elected in 1930. He has been a well-known figure in local sporting circles, particularly with the Cambridgeshire Hunt. 41 04 25

1942 09 04

Death of Solicitor. Many people in Cambridge will learn with regret of the death of Mr. H. F. Shaw, which occurred on Sunday after a long illness, at his home at 54, Lensfield Road. A well-known and much respected figure, Mr. Shaw had practised as a solicitor in the town since just after the last war. He was 50 years of age. During the last war he lost the sight of an eye while serving in the 12th Suffolk Regiment, and very shortly afterwards came up to Christ's College to study law. He took his M.A. and LL.B. degrees and studied practical law for some time under Mr. Guy Stanley. Later he became a partner in the firm, and for the past 18 months, since the retirement of Mr. Stanley, had been in sole charge. In 1936 he was appointed Clerk to the Cambridge County Petty Sessions at the Shire Hall. In the Borough he was a frequent prosecutor for the police, and also instructed many counsel for the Crown at Assizes

1942 12 24

Henry Thomas Mortimer, former footman to Judge of Assize – obit – 42 12 24

1943 11 19

New Post - Mr. J. D. Matters, Registrar of Cambridge and District County Courts for the past seven years, and also Registrar of Bishop's Stortford, King's Lynn and Wisbech County Court groups, has been appointed Registrar of Leicester County Court. He takes over at Leicester on January 1. In the

Cambridge County Court on Wednesday, congratulations and good wishes were extended to him by His Honour Judge Lawson Campbell, Mr. Grafton Pryor, Deputy-Judge, and others.

1944 03 17

Death of Mr. H. G. Spicer. Many in Cambridgeshire and beyond will learn with regret of the death on Saturday last of Mr. Henry George Spicer, J.P., of 20 Old Queen Street, Westminster, and of Homewood, Sawston. He was 68. A former High Sheriff, Mr. Spicer was well-known in Cambridge as a magistrate, and on the retirement of Judge Farrant, became chairman of the Cambridge Division. He was known in Sawston as chairman of Edward Towgood and Sons, Ltd., the old-established paper mills, which he bought for his company in 1918, and which he re-organised and modernised extensively. He also bought the Towgood estate and other land in Sawston and Whittlesford, in order to develop a flourishing group of factories for companies of which he was chairman. For his employees and others in neighbouring villages, Mr. Spicer was particularly thoughtful, and for these he laid out a sports ground, erected a theatre and cinema and a reading room and library. He also supported many other local improvements and charities. He was a generous benefactor to Sawston Village College, which, when it was built, was the first of its kind in the country.

1950

1952 07 21

The whole of the structure of the 112-year-old courts of assize at the old Shire Hall, Castle Hill, is unsafe and liable to collapse at any time. Dry rot has been attacking the floors and has now spread up the walls and plaster and into the roof. The damage is said to be irreparable and it is virtually certain that the County Council will have to write off the building as a total loss. The Court House, built of brick and stone in the Italian style has a portico supported on columns and comprises two courts and a magistrates' room from which three prisoners recently escaped by removing an iron grill over a window. Repairs would cost £50,000 52 07 21 [2.3,2.4,2.5]

1952 07 28

One of the first judges to sit in the Shire Hall Courts, built between 1814 and 1844, Mr Justice Parke, complained about the ventilation in the Crown court. Bad ventilation is one of the factors that cause dry rot and it is possible that it has taken 107 years to come to the present condition. It could be smelt very plainly and if a knife was stuck into the wood it would go in up to the hilt in most places. It was unfortunate that they had decorated the building three years ago at considerable expense and no one knew about it. Coun. Dr Woodman said: "I hope the committee will consider the dry rot in the minds of the jury as well as in the walls of the court. You are packed like peas in a pod and with bad ventilation you get one thought".

1952 08 01

Justice Melford Stevenson appointed 30th Recorder of Cambridge [1.20]

1952 08 09

The news that the roof and interior of the Shire Hall Courts on Castle Hill, Cambridge are in danger of collapse has drawn attention to the statues on top of the building. The figures represent Law – holding a book, Justice – drawn sword (scales are missing), Mercy and – holding chain – Power

1952 12 05

Cambridge City Council are objecting to the County Council's proposal to demolish the Shire Hall courts at present suffering from dry rot; their consent is needed as the building is scheduled as of special architectural or historic interest. Ald Wilding thought it was hardly necessary to demolish the building just because of some defects in the woodwork & Ald Taylor put forward a plan for preserving its very fine façade, but Coun George Edwards said the best thing would be to demolish it and have a new building erected in its place. 52 12 05

1953 01 21

Cambridge city council have asked the County not to demolish the old Assize Courts which are at present closed because of dry rot. As it is a building of special architectural interest further consideration should be given to its preservation. Dry rot does not necessarily involve the demolition of the whole structure of an affected building – none of the Colleges have had to demolish their buildings, though many of them have been affected from time to time. But the County says there is no assurance that further infection could be prevented. They intend to re-erect the façade of the building elsewhere

1953 01 31

Shire Hall courts, p9

1953 04 13

The Cambridgeshire Divisional Magistrates Court sat for the last time in the old Shire Hall Courts, where justice has been meted out for over 100 years. It is just over eight months since it was found that the building was infested with dry rot and since then all courts, save the County Bench, have been accommodated in the Guildhall. Since then there have been many arguments in the County Council Chamber but the only solution they could find was that the building would have to be demolished.

1953 06 10

Sir – the Shire Hall assize courts were closed on my order in July last year because the structure had become dangerous. Dry rot had been rampant for at least 50 years and the improvised repairs had done nothing to eliminate it. During the work of demolition fragments of newspapers dated 1922 and 1925 have been found that were left by workmen repairing the dry rot in those days. The council had to decide whether to save the bare walls of the old building and rebuild the roof and the whole of the interior, or to demolish it. The extent of the damage is now clearly revealed and confirms the necessity of demolition – Wilfrid Wingate, County Architect. 53 06 10

1954 03 16 c

A labourer who figured in a daring escape from the cells beneath Cambridge Shire Hall courts two years ago was arrested in London. He made his escape with two other men sentenced for housebreaking. In their getaway from the Shire Hall Courts – since demolished – the men forced up a grating weighing about one-and-a-half hundredweight in a nine-feet high ceiling near the detention room in which they had been placed pending their removal to Bedford Prison. Through this they climbed into the yard outside. The grating was not cemented down but its great weight and height above the floor made the lifting of it a considerable feat.

1953 06 17

Assize demolition photo, p12

1954 07 17

There were strong protests at plans for new offices at Shire Hall Cambridge. The new building would contain Assize and Quarter Sessions courts, offices and accommodation for the County Library. The courts at Linton, Caxton, Melbourn and Bottisham were ‘shockers’, housed in old police stations and the magistrates would be only too happy to do their work in an up-to-date building. Architects had strongly advised against cheese-pairing costs of the assembly hall: Cambridge’s lovely college buildings had been the best and had stood the test of time and the costs of labour and materials were rising. But a new plan for one-tier local government might mean the doom of County Councils and the scheme should be deferred 54 07 17

1954 11 01

The old Shire Hall Assize courts no longer existed; it had been pulled down. That could not be altered; it was down and a new one had to be built, councillors were told. The Judges appreciate the temporary accommodation but occasionally inquire when the Assizes are expected to be held once more in the re-built Courts; they might get tired of waiting for them. We did not want to lose

Cambridge as an Assize town. A proposal to defer their erection for two years was withdrawn but tenders will not be submitted for a year.

1954 11 27

Cambridge assize courts should be moved to the City Library site at the Guildhall, councillors suggested. There might be some overcrowding on the first day of the Assize when all the prisoners, witnesses and jurymen in all cases had to be present or if there was a case that attracted particular public interest. But there would be a substantial saving in capital expenditure. For some time they had wished to provide new premises for the library as the Central Lending Library and Reading Rooms were no longer adequate; before the war there had been proposals to move it to the old Post Office building in Petty Cury

1955 03 15

Plans for a new assize court at the Cambridge Guildhall would entail the entire rebuilding of a large proportion of the existing structure; there would be parking and traffic problems, though these would be eased with the Lion Yard multi-deck car park. The Council would be prepared to lease the premises occupied by the Library Department and the city sessions court could be used on payment of an agreed sum. 55 03 15 c

1955 05 02

The County Council agreed that an assize court on the Guildhall site was not practical. When the City had suggested the adapting the Central Library site they must have known it was inadequate. Some of the supporting columns of the Lending Library could have to go and hardly any of the reading rooms would be retained. Cambridge needed a new Central Library but this would not be sent from Heaven. It would have to be paid for and that was behind it – the City wanted someone else to pay for it. 55 05 02b

1956 02 25

Shire Hall court tenders deferred; Cambridge Daily News criticised for leading campaign against the proposed building – 56 02 25a, 56 02 26a & c

1958 05 21

Assize judges at Trinity – photos – 58 05 21

1959 01 22

Assize trumpeters – photo - 59 01 22

1959 04 18

120 children appeared city courts - less than five in 1,000 guilty of serious crime; in 1949 probation service made 87 enquiries for court, in 1958 273 [6.4]

1960s The Cambridgeshire Collection has newspaper cuttings from this date

1961 05 12

Assize Court, Castle Hill site being levelled – 61 05 12a CIP

1962 08 18

Site of old Shire Hall courts cleverly landscaped to hide the car park which lies in front of trees – 62 08 18

1964 01 25

Judges stay at Trinity College – history by F.A. Reeve – 64 01 25

1964 03 21

Fenstanton lock-up dates back to 1780 and is now a listed building. Lockups were usually inconspicuous, distinguished only by iron studded doors with small gratings. In the 17th century they were under the control of the parish constable. Prisoners were kept in them pending their transfer to the county gaol or an appearance before the magistrate. The constable was an officer of the manor and usually chief executive officer of the parish. In 1842 the appointment transferred to the parish vestry until the Police Act introduced police districts and the lock-up fell into disuse. 64 03 21

1964 06 02

Cambridgeshire County Council is anxious to buy compulsorily some land at Castle Hill, including the Sir Isaac Newton public house, for their new assize courts building scheme. They also want a private house in Gloucester Street and a cycle store. Much of the other land between Gloucester Street corner and the county police headquarters has already been acquired for the court, project permission for which has been given after a delay of several years. Work should start this year. 64 06 02a

1967 05 06

Shire Hall redevelopment envisages 15-storey block of offices and law court, car parking under pedestrian precinct – 67 05 06

1967 06 27

Bene't Hostel for Girls closed last November; girls remanded now have nowhere to go but police cell, Holloway or Borstal – 67 06 27a

1969 09 29

Royal Commission on Assizes reports suggests Crown Courts to replace Assize & Quarter Sessions [3.4]

1969 11 11

Judge leaves Trinity en route Assizes – photo – 69 11 11a

1970

1971 05 28

Cambridge to lose Assize Court under new reforms – 71 05 28

1971 10 07

Last Quarter sessions, Guildhall - transferred to Wisbech [3.5]

1971 11 23

Cambridge Assize closure ends 710-year tradition of judge's stay at Trinity college; now major cases heard at Norwich or London – 71 11 23a

1972 01 11

First sitting of Cambridge Crown Court [3.7]

1976 03 31

First community service order [3.12]

1976 12 17

The Cambridge County Court moved into a new office block between Bateman Street and Norwich Street earlier this year. Both the court and the offices are uncompromisingly modern. They are efficient, comfortable but quite impersonal. The court room with simple modern furniture lacks the character of the old premises in the centre of Cambridge. But most cases dealt with are divorce and perhaps the less daunting informal atmosphere is more suitable. The witness boxes are so close to the judge's chair than an incensed witness could hit the judge and certainly see his notes 76 12 17

1980

1980 01 30

The new magistrates courts, perched above the Lion Yard car park have been built to last for the next 100 years at a cost of £1.7 million. Some wonder how Cambridge managed to acquire such an expensive addition to the skyline in these times of stringent public spending cuts, the answer seems to be that it won its case just in time. Today the verdict would be different. After years of less-than-satisfactory courtroom conditions we have something of a showpiece. Compared to the old courts the new carpeted building is luxury itself. "From boarding house to Hilton" was how one prison officer described it. In fact the only criticism is that some people will consider the edifice 'too good' 80 01 30

1980 02 02

Caxton magistrates sat for the last time before moving to the new court building at Lion Yard, Cambridge. Some looked back through their old records going back to 1863 when courts were sometimes held in a magistrate's house or the local pub. Sentences were severe, particularly for theft. One man was jailed for 14 days with hard labour in 1864 for stealing potatoes and next year a 13-year old from Chesterton was sent to a reformatory for three years for stealing a concertina worth five shillings. Cambridge City Magistrates Court in the Guildhall also closed; it had been the starting point for many trials but working conditions were now very difficult. 80 02 02

1980 03 28

Cambridge's new £1½ million magistrates' courts above the Lion Yard multi-storey car park were officially opened by Prince Philip. Although he claimed to have stopped being surprised at anything he was obviously amused that they had been built on top of a car park, but said that it was often the most eccentric ideas which were the best. He hoped they would be required as little as possible 80 03 28a [3.17]

1982 03 12

The gallows from the old Cambridge prison behind the assize courts on Castle Hill have been restored in a quiet suburban back garden in Nottingham. The last hanging took place in November 1913. Hundreds of people queued to inspect the gaol in June 1930 before it was demolished. They included Doris Melbourne; she visited the prison three times with her father, William Wale, who took photographs of the gallows in situ. 82 03 12c

1984 03 10

Judge David Wild retires; the subject of controversy over various judgements [3.19]

1986 09 30

New prosecution system with creation of Crown Prosecution Service replacing Police 3.20]

1989 08 16

Cambridge lost coroner after 1972 Local Government Act, then appointed by County Council though Durrell styled 'Honorary City Coroner', on his retirement R. Sterndale Burrows continued but with his death title now lapses £CEN 16.8.89

1990 05 24

Cambridge Gallows fail to sell at auction – 90 05 24